



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on October 29, 2015

IRS Expands Surveillance Capacity, Buys Stingray Cellphone Trackers

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) continues increasing its capacity to target and track Americans by deploying Stingray surveillance devices, according to a story published by *The Guardian*.

As reported by the paper online on October 25, invoices obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request reveal that between 2009 and 2012, the IRS purchased Stingray surveillance equipment from Harris Corporation, one of the known manufacturers of the device.



The suitcase-sized Stingray masquerades as a cell tower to trick cellphones into connecting to it. It can give police tracking identifiers for phones within a mile or more, depending on terrain. Given the mobility of the device, police who use it can triangulate a target's location with better accuracy than if they relied on data transferred by traditional cell towers.

This equipment isn't cheap. According to published reports, each Stingray device costs about \$350,000.

The cache of invoices obtained by *The Guardian* indicates that not only has the IRS purchased these powerful surveillance devices, but they have contracted with Harris Corporation to keep them up to date, as well.

While the invoices are heavily redacted — it is obvious the IRS doesn't want this information widely published — it is known that many government agencies and law-enforcement departments are secretly purchasing and using the Stingray equipment.

The *New York Times* published an article in March summarizing the surveillance situation in many police departments:

A powerful new surveillance tool being adopted by police departments across the country comes with an unusual requirement: To buy it, law enforcement officials must sign a nondisclosure agreement preventing them from saying almost anything about the technology.

Any disclosure about the technology, which tracks cellphones and is often called StingRay, could allow criminals and terrorists to circumvent it, the F.B.I. has said in an affidavit. But the tool is adopted in such secrecy that communities are not always sure what they are buying or whether the technology could raise serious privacy concerns.

The Guardian reports that several efforts to expose the widespread use of the surveillance and tracking device has revealed that "at least 12 federal agencies are already known to have these devices, including the National Security Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The IRS makes 13."

Readers of *The New American* are aware that for years the IRS has been secretly expanding its surveillance capacity and enlarging its role as the enforcer of federal tyranny.



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In 2014, for example, Bloomberg reported that the IRS and the Forest Service (among others) awarded nearly half a million dollars to Vigilant Solutions, a California-based company that provides tools for tracking license plates and for accessing license plate databases.

Why would the IRS and the Forest Service need the technology to track the license plates of Americans? Bloomberg explains: “The IRS uses a variety of investigative tools similar to other law-enforcement agencies to assist with criminal cases,” Eric Smith, an agency spokesman, said in an e-mail. He declined to say how the IRS used the records in its investigations.

Further evidence of the IRS’s program to put Americans under surveillance is found in documents from the IRS as a result of a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

In these papers, the tax-collecting behemoth expresses the opinion that Americans have “generally no privacy” when it comes to the information included in any electronic communication from e-mail to Facebook chats and direct messages exchanged on Twitter.

These forms of communication are not protected by that expectation of privacy granted to other aspects of their personal lives; thus IRS agents need not petition a judge for the right to snoop into the content of these communications.

This unbelievable, though not unique, interpretation of the right of Americans “to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures” as guaranteed by the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, was set out in an [IRS Search Warrant Handbook](#) now in the possession of the ACLU.

Specifically, the guidelines provided to agents in the handbook state that “emails and other transmissions generally lose their reasonable expectation of privacy and thus their Fourth Amendment protection once they have been sent from an individual’s computer.”

So, from Stingray devices tracking cellphones, to license plate trackers, to snooping on electronic communication, the IRS has positioned itself perfectly to be the all-seeing eye of the federal government.

The department will know where you are, when you got there, whom you spoke to while you there, where you worked, how much you were paid, whether or not you have health insurance, and what you’ve been up to online.

This is the state of our Republic.

A former IRS deputy commissioner, Mark Matthews, is quoted in *The Guardian* as saying that the IRS employs “between 2,000 and 3,000 ‘special agents’” whose job it is to monitor Americans.

Matthews suggests that the purchase of the Stingrays by the IRS might be something “as silly as [they] got to the end of the year, had some extra funds, and somebody said, ‘We need some more of these devices.’”

Or it could be something more sinister.

While there is much we don’t know about the use of these devices and other surveillance technology by the IRS and others, what we do know is that any deprivation of liberty without conforming to the requirements set out in the Fourth Amendment is one too many. If we are a Republic of laws, then the supreme constitutional law of the land must be adhered to every time the government wants to search and seize anything from Americans.



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The standard is not whether or not the IRS claims that investigations create exigent need to violate the Constitution. The standard is the Constitution — for every issue, on every occasion, with no exceptions. Anything less than that is a step toward tyranny.

Taken together, the scope of the snooping carried on by the federal government and other agencies places every American under the threat of constant surveillance. The courts, Congress, and the president have formed an unholy alliance bent on obliterating the Constitution and establishing a country where every citizen is a suspect and is perpetually under the never-blinking eye of the government.

The establishment will likely continue construction of the surveillance until the entire country is being watched around the clock and every monitored activity is recorded and made retrievable by agents who will have a dossier on every American.

It seems the move toward total surveillance is accelerating rapidly and putting Americans and the Constitution on a collision course with totalitarianism.



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